

## **Corporate Member Profile**

### *Hilltop Global Group*

The EMBA Program at Georgetown University brought together Phil Agbeko and Osaruyi Imohe. Their many conversations during the program led to the launch of a new company that, in turn, introduces EMBA students to the powerful potential of African business.

The two entrepreneurs and EMBA grads formed Hilltop Global Group with their partners two-and-a-half years ago with a clear and distinct focus on Africa. As experts debate whether Africa is emerging as the next Asia when it comes to business investments, Hilltop Global plays the role of matchmaker for EMBA Programs and their students in Africa: The firm offers EMBA Programs, universities, and educational institutions a tailored and turnkey African Business Residency.

“We have the unique opportunity of knowing both sides of the coin,” says Agbeko.

As former EMBA students, the pair understands and appreciates the transformational value of experiential learning engagements in different parts of the world. As managing partners of a company that also consults with African firms and other organizations that are interested in continent-wide business development and private sector-driven development solutions, the two know and understand the business landscape in African countries such as Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Nigeria, and many more destinations.

“With our experience, extensive personal and professional networks, and our firsthand understanding of the learning objectives of these engagements, we are able to help identify appropriate companies and collaborators,” says Imohe. “We can scope current or future business needs that can be developed into consulting projects for global students to address during the African Business Residency.”

Hilltop maintains focus on its core goals at all times. First and foremost, the company strives to expose students to challenging business problems in Africa, challenge students’ assumptions about the African continent, develop awareness about the business climate in Africa, promote cultural appreciation and exchange, apply critical thinking and problem solving skills in a unique global setting, and foster international collaboration with teams in Africa.

The Hilltop team works closely with EMBA Programs to clarify learning objectives and with African businesses to help shape issues that align with those learning objectives. Hilltop also facilitates all logistics of the business residency and helps bridge cultural differences.

“Business practices in Africa are perhaps ‘less codified’ than in the Western World,” says Agbeko, “and there is a certain nuanced understanding that is a key success

factor. We have a deep understanding of the social, cultural, and business environment in Africa.”

In one example of a recent project, EMBA students worked with a technology and startup incubation hub to develop a comprehensive business model to suit the fast-changing technology and innovation ecosystem in Africa. Another project involved students developing a strategic expansion plan for a biotechnology company to move into a new market. In yet another successful project, students helped a technology company that started out as a “mom-and-pop” fine-tune its operations and growth strategy.

Hilltop wants to help EMBA Programs start or expand their footprint in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a new EMBAC corporate member, Agbeko and Imohe look forward to meeting and working with the many diverse academic members. “We are very enthused about the opportunity to meet and speak directly to a broader base of institutions that are thought leaders in the industry.”

There is a growing interest in Africa on both the educational and corporate sides. “There is a very huge demand from universities and other institutions to learn more about Africa,” says Agbeko.

In addition to the extractive industries, agriculture, information communications technology (ICT), financial services, biotechnology, and others are fast expanding on the continent, says Imohe. “There is a lot of opportunity to be tapped in Africa.”

That interest is translating into increased demand for cross-industry experiential business residencies.

“We have experienced year-over-year growth since we began,” says Agbeko. “We consistently receive excellent feedback from residency participants, including the universities, students, and the client companies who continue to engage with us in a professional capacity.”

In fact, the residencies directly support the success of participating businesses and also make a difference in the continued economic development of the countries, Agbeko and Imohe say. For African countries, business is an important driver in generating jobs and enhancing overall quality of life.

“The interest from companies and institutions across Africa is overwhelmingly positive,” says Imohe. “There is a strong realization and appreciation for the intrinsic value being offered. It is indeed a win-win situation where the companies get top-notch consulting services from some of the brightest minds from universities throughout the world.”

EMBA students also appreciate that their efforts have great impact. “Simultaneously, the students get the opportunity to work on ‘live case studies’ and enjoy a practical

learning experience in a unique global setting while making a positive contribution,” says Agbeko.

Currently, the firm is working to expand destinations for experiential residencies. It completed a successful pilot project in Namibia earlier this year and is already planning a 40-student residency there in the spring of 2019.

Agbeko and Imohe take satisfaction in seeing the results of the residencies.

“Watching the transformation the participants go through often preceded by apprehension about Africa in the initial discussions is most satisfying,” says Imohe.

“Organically shaping the African narrative more positively is also especially fulfilling and rewarding. Showcasing the businesses and institutions that are working tirelessly to change Africa’s socio-economic status makes for a ‘good day in the office.’ “

*For more information, visit Hilltop Global Group at <http://hilltopglobalgroup.com/> or contact Phil Agbeko at [pagbeko@hilltopglobalgroup.com](mailto:pagbeko@hilltopglobalgroup.com) or Osa Imohe at [oimohe@hilltopglobalgroup.com](mailto:oimohe@hilltopglobalgroup.com)*

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